

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 00666 142317Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0632
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0666

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: MALAISE WITHIN THE DMCH

1. SMOLDERING DISCONTENT WITHIN THE DMC ERUPTED THIS WEEK WHEN THE PARTY'S PURPOSE, COHESION AND STRENGTH WERE FOUND WANTING IN A VOTE IN THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE. THE ISSUE WAS SETTLEMENTS.

2. ONE OF THE FEW CONCESSIONS WRUNG FROM THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT TO ENABLE THE DMC TO JOIN THE COALITION WAS THE RIGHT TO DEMAND REFERRAL TO THE KNESSET COMMITTEE FOR DECISION, PROPOSALS FOR NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THAT RIGHT WAS EXERCISED THIS WEEK ON THE QUESTION OF
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 00666 142317Z

APPROVING NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK. IN THE SEVERAL VOTES TAKEN, THE COMMITTEE APPROVED THE SETTLEMENTS BY MARGINS OF THREE OR FOUR. THE FOUR DMC MEMBERS VOTED THREE DIFFERENT WAYS; WHEREAS LIKUD MKS MAINTAINED SOLID PARTY DISCIPLINE IN FAVOR OF THE SETTLEMENTS--A PICTURE THAT MADE THE DMC LOOK FOOLISH. THEIR PURPOSE IN DEMANDING THE RIGHT TO TRANSFER SETTLEMENT QUESTIONS TO THE KNESSET COMMITTEE,

WHEREIN THE LIKUD AND NRP FORM A MAJORITY, WAS THE EXPECTATION THAT SOME LIKUD-LIBERALS IN THE COMMITTEE WOULD SUPPORT DMC OPPOSITION TO SETTLEMENT IN POPULATED AREAS OF THE WEST BANK. THE VOTING RESULT HIGHLIGHTED THE DISHARMONY IN THE DMC AND ITS MISCALCULATION OVER LIBERAL PARTY COHESION.

3. SHMUEL TOLEDANO, ONE OF THE TWO DMC MKS (THE OTHER WAS RUBENSTEIN) WHO VOTED CONSISTANTLY AGAINST THE SETTLEMENTS WAS PARTICULARLY INCENSED WITH HIS PARTY'S DISPLAY OF DISUNITY IN THE KNESSET COMMITTEE, AS WAS AMNON RUBENSTEIN. TOLEDANO IS THE LEADER OF SOME FOUR TO SEVEN DMC MKS WHO ARE FLIRTING WITH THE NOTION OF SPLITTING. THE OTHERS INCLUDE RUBENSTEIN, MORDECHAI WIRSHUBSKI AND ASSAF YAGURI, WITH MORDECHAI ALGERBELI AND ZAIDAN ATASHI ALSO SOMETIMES PLACED AMONG THE DISSENTERS. AT A DMC COUNCIL (ITS CENTRAL COMMITTEE) MEETING JANUARY 11, CALLED TO HEAR YADIN REPORT ON THE CURRENT PEACE MOVES, DEMANDS TO DEBATE "THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT" WERE BARELY STAVED OFF. HOWEVER, YADIN'S AIMLESS LEADERSHIP AND THE PARTY'S MALAISE WERE PERSISTENT TOPICS IN THE PRESS THIS WEEK.

4. MK AKIVA NOF, A DMC LOYALIST, TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT AS SOON AS TOLEDANO IS ABLE TO ENLIST FOUR OTHER DISSENTERS IN THE PARTY TO DEFECT--ENOUGH TO DEMAND A MINISTERIAL SLOT--HE WILL LEAD A SPLIT OUT OF THE DMC BUT STAY WITHIN THE COALITION. TOLEDANO'S MAIN COMPLAINTS ARE NEGLECT
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 00666 142317Z

OF THE REFORM ISSUE; LACK OF PARTY DISCIPLINE IN GENERAL, AND ON SETTLEMENTS IN PARTICULAR (HE IS ESPECIALLY UPSET BY MK MEIR ZOREA'S HAWKISH SUPPORT OF SETTLEMENT IN THE TERRITORIES); AND YADIN'S UNINSPIRED LEADERSHIP. HIS CRITICISM OF YADIN ALSO OWES SOMETHING TO PERSONAL PIQUE AT YADIN'S POINTED REFUSAL TO ENDORSE TOLEDANO WHEN THE LATTER'S NAME WAS MENTIONED AS A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED PRESIDENT KATZIR. RUBENSTEIN IS TOTALLY DISGUSTED ABOUT LACK OF SUPPORT FROM THE DMC CABINET MINISTERS FOR THIS EFFORT AGAINST SETTLEMENTS IN THE KNESSET COMMITTEE. HE SAYS HE THINKS THE PARTY IS FINISHED, PERHAPS ONLY PARTLY REFLECTING HIS TASTE FOR HYPERBOLE.

5. EIGHT MONTHS AFTER ITS IMPRESSIVE SHOWING AT THE POLLS AND NEARLY THREE MONTHS AFTER JOINING THE COALITION, ALL OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THE PARTY IS IN TROUBLE. IT HAS TAKEN ON THE APPEARANCE OF A COLLECTION OF POLITICIANS WITH DIVERGENT VIEWS WHOSE CENTRAL PURPOSE IN COMBINING --REFORM OF ISRAELI INSTITUTIONS--IS COMPLETELY OVERSHADOWED NOW BY THE PEACE ISSUE. AS A PARTY IT HAS LITTLE QUARREL WITH BEGIN'S PEACE PROPOSALS AND

THEREFORE HAS NO DISTINCTIVE VOICE IN THE AREA OF
FOREIGN POLICY. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT SEEN AS EVEN
EXERCISING SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE TOWARD REFORM WITHIN
GOVERNMENT COUNCILS. WHEREAS IT CAMPAIGNED ON REDUCING
THE NUMBER OF CABINET MINISTERS, ITS ENTRY INTO THE
GOVERNMENT PRECIPITATED
THE ADDITION LAST WEEK
OF TWO MINISTERS WITHOUT PORTFOLIO AS A STEP NECESSARY TO
MAINTAIN PARTY BALANCE IN THE COALITION. IN CREASINGLY,
THE PARTY LOOKS REDUNDANT. MORE-
OVER, YADIN'S LEADERSHIP IS CHARACTERIZED AS AUTHORITARIAN,
BUT WITHOUT PURPOSE OR IDEAS. ON THE OTHER HAND, A REVOLT
AGAINST HIS LEADERSHIP WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE THAN THE PARTY
COULD SUSTAIN. UNLESS IT IS ABLE TO PULL ITSELF
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PAGE 04 TEL AV 00666 142317Z

TOGETHER AROUND A COHERENT REFORM-PLAN--PERHAPS A POST-
SETTLEMENT DOMESTIC PROGRAM--IT MAY WELL DISINTEGRATE BE-
FORE THE NEXT ELECTION.
LEWIS

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